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ABSTRACT

Through active user participation, Washington State University Education Library was able to provide ERIC computer searching services to students, faculty, and community members with no additional library staff. Specialized training for the two librarians, as well as rental of a terminal for the library, resulted in over 100 searches in 1974-5. Appended are informational materials for use by search requestors to enable them to actively participate in the search process, both during descriptor selection and during the computer run. (STS)

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ERIC On-Line With No Extra Staffing

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ERIC On-Line With No Extra Staffing

In the Summer of 1974, the Washington State University library began providing an additional service to its Education Library (housed within the College of Education) users -- ERIC computer-based bibliographic searches. The Education Library was not provided with additional professional or support staff help for this service, and was already short-staffed in its other reference services to almost 1200 undergraduates, 300 graduate students, and 50 faculty members.

Nevertheless, the library administration did provide funds to send one of the two professionals to an intensive training session in Palo Alto, California conducted by Lockheed for its new Dialog users. From this workshop, the librarian was able to grasp the basic skills necessary to plan the search profile with the patron, operate the computer terminal for the on-line search, and train the other reference librarian in searching the data bases in the ERIC (Resources in Education and Current Index to Journals in Education), Exceptional Child Education Abstracts, and Abstracts of Instructional Materials/Abstracts of Research Materials files. However, without the active participation and understanding of the library patron as a crucial and necessary colleague in the initial structure of the search strategy, and as a resource person during the actual interaction with the terminal, the number of successfully completed searches in ERIC, ECEA, and AIM/ARM during the 1974-75 year would have been substantially reduced.

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When the Education Library agreed to undertake the capabilities of the Dialog system, decisions had to be made concerning the administration (budgeting, record-keeping, organization), operation (user negotiation, search strategy, patron-librarian relationship), and evaluation of the service. In addition, selection of the computer hardware and physical location of the terminal were factors with which to contend.

The Library Administrative Office had established the fees of 85¢ per minute, plus 10¢ per off-line abstract, as a rate for the WSU community, and an extra $7.50 for users outside of the university, so no decision was necessary as to the subsidization of the search service. But, for the other administrative details, an accession folder was established for searches conducted in each of the files with the following data collected: File and search number, date run, search title, requester's name, total search charge (both on and off-line), how paid (personal check or research grant), and comments.

Data Coordinator

There was no one "Coordinator of Data Searching". Both librarians were trained in conducting searches, and each was responsible for recording information in the folder after a search was run. Often, a search was not paid for immediately after its completion, so the folder served as both a record

of the searches run, and as a holder of the completed searches. When the search was eventually paid for, it was released to the patron and a copy of the profile (listing the full charges) sent to the Library Administrative Office with either the personal check or the research grant form. The profile sheet contained a space for comments about the search, such as phone calls made, and the LAO assumed the cost for these.

Because it was not possible to determine the frequency of the ERIC search requests, no specific date or time was scheduled for user negotiation. Instead, patrons were encouraged to come into the library at their convenience, and discuss their search with one of the two librarians. If a librarian was not available at the moment, an appointment was scheduled for a later date. At this time, the librarian listened to the patron's request, and determined if a manual or automated search were more appropriate. If the search request was within the parameters of the ERIC data base, and suitable to one of the files, an explanation was provided by the librarian about the advantages (multifactorial) and disadvantages (time span covered) of the search service.

In addition, a written explanation of the search strategy and a sample profile sheet (Figures 1, 2, and 3) were given to the patron to provide more detailed information. The patron was then introduced to the Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors and the most

recent Resources in Education volume for a list of new thesaurus terms (the capability of full-text searching was not available through Dialog for the ERIC files at this time). After being given a blank profile sheet with the sample as a guide, the patron was told to clearly state the search question using natural language; underline the key concepts or terms having special significance to the search; and consult the thesaurus and RIE volume for terms which expressed the natural language thoughts. These controlled vocabulary terms were then grouped into no more than five cluster ideas of synonymous meaning, and put into priority order by the patron.

When the patron completed the preliminary profile sheet (which took anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour, depending upon the sophistication of the search topic and the competency of the patron), another face-to-face interview was held with the librarian to add, correct, and verify the terms on the profile sheet. Particular care was given to checking singular and plural words as they appeared in the thesaurus lists; the spelling of the names of authors to be searched; and the relationship between descriptors, identifiers, mandatory leveling terms, and population groups. Moreover, a random manual check was made by the librarian of the RIE subject index to insure the proper understanding of the terms, and a follow-up of pertinent titles in the abstract

section was made to locate additional descriptors or identifiers. When all information was double-checked, the boolean logic was formulated by the librarian, in consultation with the patron, based upon the prioritized cluster concepts.

Search Run

A date and time was then scheduled to run the search when both the librarian and the patron were available. The patron was encouraged to be present for the search to act as a "navigator", and see that all the descriptors, identifiers, and names were accurately fed into the computer. If the logic yielded no hits, the patron was an important component in re-vamping the search on-line with the librarian to maximize the results. Moreover, when the patron was able to see the number of documents retrieved from the file, only then could he/she determine the desired citation format (e.g. abstract number, number and title, full abstract), and whether to receive the information immediately (on-line) or batched within three days from Lockheed in Palo Alto.

With the patron playing an active role in both the profile contruction and the actual running of the search, he/she was better able to understand the steps involved, and therefore, more skilled in critically evaluating the output received. This feedback stage proved to be crucial for the librarian's increased expertise in data searching. Because the patron was

"in on the ground floor," the comments made were instrumental in advancing the librarian's skill and were complimentary to the knowledge received from reading the professional literature on the subject.

Evaluation Comments

The evaluation comments were received orally through a post-search interview with the patron, and significant points were recorded on the sheet kept in the accession folder. In addition, one copy of every profile sheet and completed search (the originals were given to the patron) were attached together, and kept in another folder. This folder, designated as the reference file, was consulted by the librarian when a similar request was received to the one already run. It was kept in the reference desk and never shown to the new patron; therefore, the confidentiality of every search topic was fully respected.

Until the middle of the year, searches were performed on a 10 CPS teletype machine located outside of the library proper. This arrangement necessitated the librarian conducting the search to be away from the library anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour, depending upon the length of the search and the computer down time. Because of the slowness of the teletype machine and the inconvenience of the terminal location, the Education Department was approached to rent a 30 CPS terminal to be located within the library walls. Due to the relative isolation of Washington State University in rural Washington, it was agreed that the terminal

rented must be easily servicable. Therefore, a GE Terminet, serviced by the local General Telephone office, was selected.

With the terminal installed in a corner of the library, search requests did increase. Not only was the computer capability now visible, but searches could be performed three times as fast, so costs were substantially reduced.

Conclusion

For the 1974-75 year, the two librarians performed over 100 searches, with several duplicated in more than one file. By utilizing both the subject competency of the patron in the initial phase of profile construction, and the colleague relationship during the actual running of the search, the librarians were able to perform the search services with no extra staff help. Viewing the patron as an integral partner, the librarians were also able to find time for administrative matters (record-keeping) and their own continuing education (reading professional literature), all adding up to an increased proficiency in the search process, a greater user satisfaction, and improved library public relations.

Acknowledgments

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FIGURE 1

COMPUTERIZED BIBLIOGRAPHIC DATA SEARCHES

WSU Education Library

In order to help you prepare a search profile to produce a relevant computerized search of a data-base, these instructions are intended to give a rough picture of how the computer extracts information, and how to choose and arrange terms for use in a search.

(1) The first step is to write a brief statement of the problem, underlining terms having special significance for your search.

(2) Second, consult the thesaurus, if there is one for the data base you are searching, to find valid terms. The ERIC thesaurus will be used as an example. Terms to be used in an ERIC search must be written exactly as they appear in the thesaurus, since the data base has a controlled vocabulary. Note that many terms are often listed under one main term--these are related terms (RT), broad terms (BT), or narrow terms (NT). Use only those terms from these lists which are relevant to your search. You cannot use terms which follow the symbol UF, as this indicates that the term above it is used for the word or words after UF.

(3) It will make it easier to conduct the search if you group terms on the request form in clusters with similar meanings. These will then be combined and given to the computer in combinations using AND, OR, and NOT. See sample attached request form. A hypothetical search will be used to demonstrate the process.

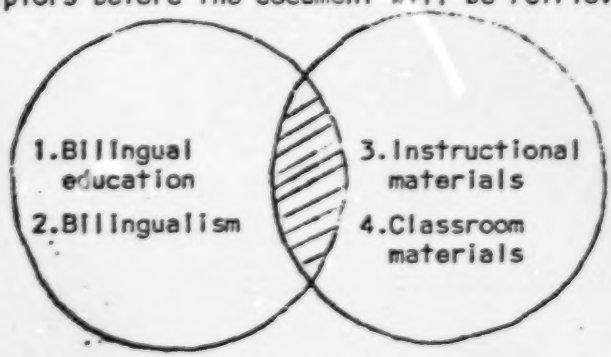
Statement of problem: "I want to find what materials there are for instructional or classroom use on bilingual education, and if there are any statewide plans for the use of such materials. I do not want to consider FLES (Foreign Languages in the Elementary School) materials." Terms from the ERIC thesaurus, as they will be used in this search, can be arranged into groups or clusters of related or synonymous terms:

Cluster I	Cluster II	Cluster III
1. Bilingual education	3. Instructional materials	5. FLES materials
2. Bilingualism	4. Classroom materials	

Cluster IV

6. Statewide planning

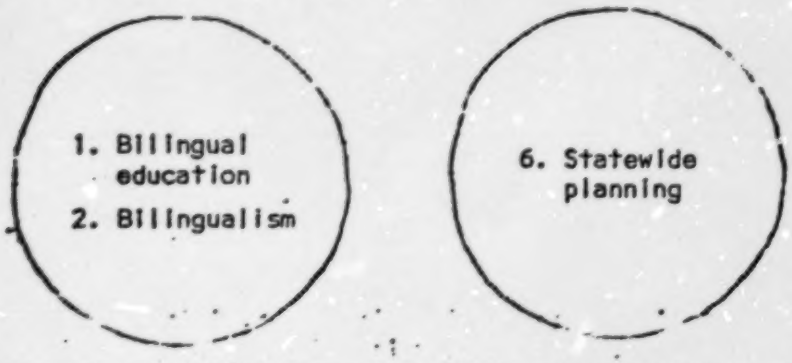
When you link two or more terms with AND, both elements must occur as descriptors before the document will be retrieved.



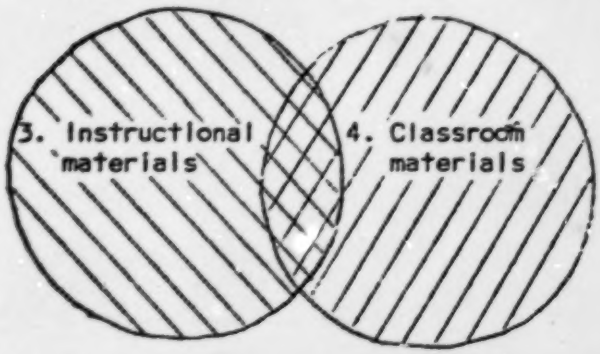
AND linking narrows scope of search.

FIGURE 2

Combining terms with the AND link can yield no citations, if there are no documents in the data base which contain both terms as descriptors. The effect, in diagram form, would be:

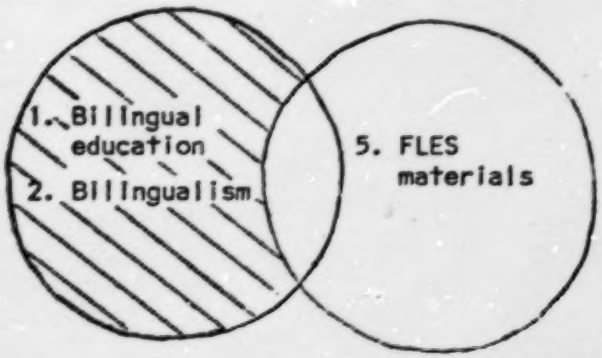


Synonymous or similar conceptual terms are combined by OR, retrieving all documents containing either element as descriptors.



OR linking broadens scope.

If a concept is to be excluded from the search, the NOT relationship is used. This will retrieve all documents indexed under one term, and exclude those in another.



NOT takes away concept.

Before the actual on-line search begins, you should decide if you want on-line printing of document and journal numbers only, or numbers and titles, or the full abstracts. Another less expensive alternative is to have the information printed and air mailed to WSU--this normally takes 3 or 4 days. Microfiche of ERIC documents are housed in the Education Library; journal articles can be located in the Education Library or in Holland Library. Some data bases other than ERIC which are, or will soon be, available for computer searches are AIM-ARM, Exceptional Child Education Abstracts, and Psychological Abstracts.

FIGURE 3

Washington State University Library

SEARCH NAME AND NO._____

COMPUTER-BASED BIBLIOGRAPHIC SERVICES REQUEST

Date run_____

Search run by_____

PLEASE PRINT

Requested by_____ Rank_____ Department_____

Telephone (office)_____ (home)_____ Address_____

Request submitted by (if different from above)_____

DATA BASE TO BE SEARCHED_____ Payment by: Cash_____; IRI_____;

Cain grant_____: ID No._____

My question is:_____

KEYWORDS, DESCRIPTORS, IDENTIFIERS (group in clusters of similar terms or concepts)

or		or	or	or
or	or	or	or	or
or	or	or	or	or
or	or	or	or	or

LANGUAGE RESTRICTIONS:
( ) None
( ) English only

CITATIONS
( ) Maximum
( ) Minimum

ON-LINE FORMAT
( ) Abstract numbers only
( ) Abstract numbers & titles
( ) Full abstracts
( ) Other (specify)
_____

OFF-LINE FORMAT
( ) Abstract numbers only
( ) Abstract numbers & titles
( ) Full abstracts
( ) Other (specify)
_____

Known relevant citations (sources)

Date restriction ( ) None; ( )____ to date; ( ) Prior to____; ( )____thru_____

FOR LIBRARY USE ONLY

LOGOFF TIME_____
LOGON TIME_____
Total on-line time_____
Times rate per min._____
On-line charge_____

No. off-line items_____
Times rate per item_____
Off-line charge_____

Total charge_____

Telephone calls
To:
Phone No._____ Date_____
_____ Date_____
_____ Date_____

Comments or problems